The BLUE JAY

OFFICIAL BULLETIN
of the
NATURAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

In Co-operation with
The Saskatchewan Provincial Museum

THE BLUE JAY

Official publication of the

SASKATCHEWAN NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY
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The aim of this society is to continue and extend the work and ideas of the Founder of the "Blue Jay", the late Mrs. Isabel M. Priestly, in forming a medium for the exchange of nature observations of mutual interest, and in working together for the protection and conservation of the wild life of Saskatchewan.

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HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

The BLUE JAY is published quarterly at a yearly subscription rate of $1.00. Anyone interested in any phase of nature will be a welcome member of this organization. All subscriptions will start and terminate on the first day of January. Those who have paid their subscriptions at the old rate will be credited with this amount as part payment on this year's subscription.

Will members please make special note that all material for the BLUE JAY should be sent to the Editor, at 1077 Garnet Street, Regina, and all subscriptions and business letters to Mr. William Whitehead, 2624 Angus Blvd., Regina.

MATERIAL FOR THE NEXT ISSUE SHOULD BE SUBMITTED NOT LATER THAN MAY15,

EDITOR'S DESK

In the first number of this Bulletin published in the fall of 1942, Mrs. I.M. Priestly wrote: "We present the first issue of the Blue Jay fully conscious of its many and probably glaring shortcomings. We know there is a quotation that "Fools rush in -----". Maybe it applies in our case, but anyway we should like to receive frank comments, criticism and suggestions, so we can make further issues of our bulletin of greater value to nature lovers of the province."

Those of us who have been constant readers of the BLUE JAY for the past six years know how well that work has been done and how accurately it has portrayed the keen interest of men and women throughout Saskatchewan in wild life and the pressing problems in relation to its conservation.

With this issue, the Saskatchewan Natural History Society makes its debut, and in carrying on the work wishes to reiterate the statement and the plea made by its first editor. We, too, invite suggestions and constructive criticism and most earnestly solicit contributions from our members and others in every section of the province. We have been greatly heartened already by the support given for this issue and by the host of kind letters wishing us success and offering future help.

Believing that the best conservation laws are not found in the pages of our statute books but in the hearts of nature lovers and true sportsmen, the policy of the BLUE JAY in respect to the protection of wild life will remain the same. The status of various predatory birds and other animals has often been discussed by members of this Society. Scientific investigations bring to light the fact that coyotes, timber wolves, weasels, hawks, crows, magpies and a host of other "pests" form important links in the chains which preserve the balance of nature. The majority of us like to see all of these animals in their natural setting and pray that no species will be exterminated because of selfish reasons on the part of a minority.

When robins raid and destroy our strawberry patch, we try to protect that patch but do not attempt to pass a death sentence on either the entire species or the friendly robin on our neighbor's lawn. When coyotes raid the sheep ranch and poultry yard, we believe it the owners duty to protect that ranch and chicken house -- and not advocate wholesale slaughter in areas where they might be doing more good than harm. We believe that offenders only should pay the penalty. We deal with humans, the greatest predators of all, that way and can well afford to pass on the same treatment to the rest of the animal kingdom.

John Ruskin has written: "God has given us the earth for our life. It is a great entail. It belongs as much to those who come after us as to us; and we have no right, by anything that we do, or neglect to do, to involve them in unnecessary penalties, or to deprive them of benefits which are theirs by right."

Lloyd T. Carmichael.

Expressions of Appreciation

I cannot express the depth of my gratitude to those of you who are carrying on with this publication. Having been so close to the "Blue Jay" from the moment of its "birth pains", shall we say, I feel safe in stating that I alone know what it meant to Mrs. Priestly and the amount of work and thought she put into it. If for no other reason than that, and there are numerous reasons for its continuation, I can only look on it as a "monument" to her and her love for Nature's finest, as well as the increased love of such things that broadened through the "Blue Jay" for all those who read it.

As all readers know, the "Blue Jay" was first published as a bulletin for the benefit of the members of the Yorkton Natural History Society. The interest taken in it and its circulation growth was a source of pleasant surprise to Mrs. Priestly. Naturally I felt a great deal of reflected pride in this myself.

From the time that its growth seemed a positive fact it was Mrs. Priestly's belief that it should become the official organ of a society of wider scope. There was no provincial organization and the formation of one seemed unlikely, hence her approach to the Provincial Museum for joint sponsorship in September, 1945. That her one-time dream is about to become realized is a great source of satisfaction to our children and myself.

Robt.J. (Bob) Priestly,
Regina.

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With the inauguration of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society and its assumption of the publication of the BLUE JAY, the members of the Yorkton Natural History Society extend best wishes to the new Society and pledge their support. Yorkton deservedly enjoys a measure of pride in the efforts of publishing the BLUE JAY in the past, but passes on the editorship with confidence to Mr. L. T. Carmichael with the desire that he should perpetuate the vital spirit and interest in nature possessed by Mr. Cliff Shaw and the late Mrs. I. M. Priestly.

Clive Tallant,
Vice-President,
Yorkton Natural History Society.

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In conservation alone, I feel as if little voices are calling to you, who seem to understand their plight. Many are seriously threatened with extermination and may be lost forever. Let us not be known as a generation of ruthless destructiveness but instead do everything in our power to save our beautiful native life. Through the medium of the BLUE JAY a great opportunity is given to you to present the true facts and appeal for justice. I am vitally concerned over the fate of the flora and fauna of our Prairies. However, I have great faith in humanity, and when the true facts are known by all, the public will cease destroying and start conserving.

John W. Kozier,
Manitoba Sanatorium,
Ninette, Manitoba.

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BIRD SECTION
PRAIRIE CHICKEN DANCING GROUNDS

It was most gratifying to receive so many interesting replies to our request for information in the last issue about these areas. It was felt that these sites are not only unusual but are interesting enough to conserve for observation and study purposes. The apparent prevalence of these "happy hunting grounds" will come as a surprise to many of our readers.

Mrs. Marion Nixon of Wauchope, tells us of a Sharptail dancing ground on the south-west quarter of 15-8-33, west of the 1st. It lies on an exposed long knoll across the top of a "T" of open ground, flanked by bluffs. South of it, on the open prairie is an isolated "rubbing" tree, used by grazing stock in the spring time, and serving as a landmark to find the location.

From Grenfell comes the report of two dancing grounds. Mrs. F. Bilsbury writes: "One is located about a mile south of our farm. It is on the side of a grass prairie trail. Thirty or more birds were observed by Mr. Douglas Parsons here on New Year's day. The other one is on the north end of a field on the S.E. quarter of Section 13. When the field is in summerfallow the ground is packed hard around the dancing ground, and likewise in winter the snow is hard enough to hold up a man. Flocks of birds have been noted by myself many times there.

"Although I have lived in Saskatchewan for nearly forty years", writes Mr. H. A. Anslow, of Stony Beach, "I have only once seen this strange and interesting spectacle until about eight years ago. At that time a group of chickens, usually twelve to fourteen, selected a slight elevation in the middle of my cultivated land. Every summer for at least four years they used this same spot. I have stopped the tractor within a few yards of them to watch their antics. I had thought that they danced only in the mating season, but this does not seem to be the case. Every day about four o'clock they would begin to arrive -- the early comers waiting until the others were there before the dance began. The location of the land is about twenty miles north-west of Regina, S.W.$\frac{1}{4}$ of Sec. 5, Tn. 19, R.21.

(Mr. Anslow left this farm in 1944 and would be interested in finding out if these dancing grounds are still in use.)

Mrs. John Hubbard, Jr., also of Grenfell, reports three dancing grounds. Apparently these are different areas from those reported by Mrs. Bilsbury. One is on the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 25-8-18, W.2nd One on the S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 25-8-18 and the other on the N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 5-7-18. About thirty birds use these grounds.

And from Fort San, Mr. Richard A. Nevard describes the locations of two of these interesting dancing grounds. One is on his father's farm at Lipton, located on the S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 13-24-14. The other is on the S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ of 30-24-14. Mr. Nevard writes that he will make a count in the early spring and give us more details later.

A large dancing ground has been reported near Clashmoor, by Mr. E. W. Arnold, of Valparaiso. He has seen as many as forty or fifty on the field at one time. He will give us the land location later and try to get some pictures of it in the spring.

Miss B. Anita Coneybears, of Strasbourg, informs us that there are two prairie chicken dancing grounds on quarters rented by her family from a neighbor. She has shown these grounds to several people interested in natural history.

This has been a long cold winter, but fortunately the snowfall has been light in comparison with the unusual precipitation of the past two years. Reports from various sections of the province tell of an abundance of haws, rose hips, saskatoons, chokecherries, wolf willow berries, maple seeds and spruce and pine cones, Apparently the birds have been blessed with full stomachs and have wintered well.

Valparaiso - E. W. Arnold: "Hungarian partridge really seem to be on the increase around here. Last winter I noticed only five, but on January 3rd of this year I saw five flocks with from five to fourteen birds in each. The sharp tailed grouse are also on the increase. It is great to see these fine birds coming back. They have been very scarce here for several years."

Arcola - It is good news to hear the report from Mr. Allen Sturges who writes that there has been, this winter, a strong population of prairie chickens in the narrow park belt where he lives, some five miles south of his home town.

Okla - Mrs. W. Roach writes: "Grouse and partridge (Ruffed Grouse) have increased considerably in this locality. In fact there were far too many on our grain stocks during the fall."

Woodrow - Fred C. Parchman: "A neighbor reports about fifty pheasants feeding on his stacks. I have seen much of pheasant life lately too. There are about a dozen which appear on these premises daily and the birds seem to be wintering in splendid shape. On one trip of eight miles to Woodrow I counted seventeen pheasants feeding in a wheat field near a farmer's grove. I also saw seven feeding two miles south of town at Pinto Creek."

Swift Current - George Hooey - Here is a record of interest and we would like other reports of these birds from our members in the south west. "Three Sage Hens", writes Mr. Hooey, put in an appearance in our district last fall -- the first ones ever noted in this district. I understand their farthest northern range is at Beaver Valley, sixty miles south of here. The old-timers of that district inform me that the Sage Hens migrate south to the Milk River Basin in the fall. The birds were first noted by a neighbor, Jeff Payne."

Torch River - C. S. Francis. "Sharp Tailed Grouse, Hungarian Partridge and Ruffed Grouse can be seen on my farm any day", reports Mr. Francis. "The Sharptails and the little Huns seem to very much appreciate the feed we keep out for them around the barn-yard and strawstacks, Of course the Ruffies disdain to eat weedseeds or grain, seeming to prefer black poplar and willow buds.

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OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS, HERE AND THERE

SALTCOATS -- Mrs. J. J. Wells.

Mrs. Wells, although now unable to walk far, writes that she is keenly interested in wild life of all kinds. " I feed the chickadees in winter, the Hairy Woodpecker, the juncos and the sparrows. Those are the only birds which are around the house now. We used to have blue jays and ruffed grouse, but I have not seen a blue jay for twenty years now. I saw one ruffed grouse recently, the first in 10 years."

SKULL CREEK - Steve A. Mann.

According to Mr. Mann there are very few prairie chickens in the vicinity of Skull Creek. He reports, however, an unusually large number of ducks on his two watering dams. Twenty families in June and July

increased to about two hundred and fifty individuals by the middle of September. After that more and more congregated, especially mallards, until at time of freeze-up there were more than three thousand on them. "One morning", he writes, "they were so thick on the shore that I don't think a person could have thrown a stone without hitting one." No one is allowed to hunt on these dams, which cover about five acres.

ROKEBY - Francis A. Switzer.

We are pleased to get this report from Francis, who at the age of eleven, has written that he will do his best to submit nature observations for each issue.

"About the middle of October at Saltcoats Lake, as near as I could judge, a Double-Crested Cormorant stood on the end of a cement pier, preening its feathers. I was in a car at the time, about twenty-five feet away from the bird. It seemed to take little notice of the car. As far as I could learn, Cormorants are very rarely seen in this part". (Under favorable conditions, Francis, Cormorants have been quite common in Saskatchewan. Hundreds have been banded in the Quill Lake area and they are prevalent in the Moose Mountain Park. Dry years have been responsible for their scarcity in the Yorkton area. They may be distinguished by their bill, the upper beak of which terminates in a sharp downward turned hook which must greatly aid the bird in holding its prey. The legs are short and stout and the feet are large and webbed. The tail feathers are very strong and at times help to support the bird when resting in an erect position. ED.)

GRENFELL - Mr. and Mrs. John Hubbard, Jr.

Readers will recall how year after year the Hairy Woodpeckers have been a constant nuisance around the Hubbard's grain bins. "They are quite prevalent again this year and are up to their tricks around the granaries the same as ever," writes Mrs. Hubbard. The Downy Woodpeckers are scarce, due, perhaps to the cleaning of the bush. One Blue Jay was seen at the farm last fall. They are very scarce in the district, although several have been seen in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

FORT SAN - Miss Pearl Guest.

Speaking of Blue Jays -- Miss Guest reports that there were lots of them at Green Lake last fall and early winter. "On my walk the day before I left" she writes, "I saw them knocking seed out of the cones; the striking of the cones on the frozen branches echoing sharply through the woods." (We are sorry to report that due to a nervous breakdown, Miss Guest was admitted to hospital at Fort San early in January and will be unable to work for some months. The BLUE JAY wishes her a speedy recovery.)

WOODROW - Fred C. Parchman.

"Saw what I thought was a Great Grey Owl. It was flying low across the flats. I understand such a bird was seen two years ago. I don't remember having seen its like." (The Great Grey Owl is not commonly seen on the prairie although several observations have been made. It was reported to the Provincial Museum from Indian Head several times - in 1890, 1916 and 1917 by George Lang. J. H. Wilson also located one there in

BIRDS:

1936, This specimen is in the Museum. One pair of feet were received in the Owl campaign of the Fish and Game Leauge during the winter of 1941. ED.)

TORCH RIVER -- G. Stuart Francis.

We welcome again some very interesting observations from Spruce Dale Farm. "We have had a Bronze Grackle Blackbird staying with us all winter and despite very frigid temperatures -- as low as 44 degrees below zero -- he seems to be wintering in good condition. Probably at this time he should be away down in Maryland or thereabouts. We have a large number of spruce trees around the buildings and last summer there was an unusually heavy crop of cones on the trees. Now the Pine Grosbeaks and White Winged Crossbills have most of the cones pulled off. Around some of the trees there is a brown ring of cones, completely surrounding the tree and covering the snow entirely."

REGINA -- Doug Gilroy.

Many of our members and dozens more whom we hope will join with us in this Society are most considerate of the birds which come around the yard during the cold winter days. Mr. Gilroy has been feeding two Chickadees and a male Downy Woodpecker all winter and has been doing his best to keep a fatherly eye on a Robin who has been around the house since December 26, He appeared again on January 18 and once more on February 7. "He was full of life and perky and chirpy as could be, not seeming to bother about the below zero weather."

Dipping down into his record book Mr. Gilroy has brought to light several other interesting observations. On September 28 he came across a little Burrowing Owl sitting in a gopher hole. Although frightened away it returned and remained there for two days. He is of the opinion that it was only resting there on its way south but still wonders why he insisted on remaining there and always returned even when disturbed. Magpies seemed more plentiful than ever before. At the end of September he noticed a large number of flocks with some fifty to a hundred in each. Cooper Hawks were seen October 18. On October 26 a great flock of Robins went through. The woods were full of them. Next day all were gone.

A Tragedy:

On November 6, Mr. Gilroy writes: "While driving to Regina beautiful flocks of Snow Buntings would fly from the gravel in front of the car. Then I began to see dead buntings lying on the road -- birds that waited too late to fly from the front of speeding cars. In a distance of a mile and a half I counted twelve dead ones and doubtless there were others that fluttered into the ditch with broken wings. This is indeed a shame and no doubt the same thing is happening on other highways. If we could only think to slow down our vehicle while passing through flocks of feeding birds such tragedies would not occur."

ARCOLA -- Allen Sturgess.

To Mr. Sturgess and his poultry-raising neighbors the Great Horned Owl is destructive indeed. He writes that over a period of years he has

BIRDS:

lost several hundreds of dollars worth of poultry to this night hunter. He now uses a steel trap set on a high post near the coops and thus takes advantage of the owl's weakness of looking over the situation before the attack. "They would", he said, " have put me out of business had I not been able to take them in this way."

BURNHAM -- Arthur Ward.

"A blizzard struck this district on February 11, yet in spite of it, four Redpolls were observed in the protection of our trees the following morning. Although temperatures have been around twenty below zero, With only an occasional rise above zero, all birds have wintered very well, for there appears to be no lack of feed.

Owing to our visit to England, only 108 birds were banded last summer and fall. One of these, a newcomer to our district, was the Eastern Towhee. Strangely, the last bird caught (Oct. 25) was an Oven Bird. This bird has not been seen later than the last week in August, in former years at our station.

STRASBOURG - B. Anita Coneybeare.

Adequate protection of property against predators seems a much better practice than advocating their complete destruction. The writer states that Magpies are around their place every day, but she knows that they will be disappointed if they cast envious eyes in the direction of their baby chickens. "If they do", she says, "they will have to be content to look at them through glass. As far as we know, Magpies have never taken any of our chicks. We always raise them early and then keep them under glass and wire. The neighbors all complain but they let theirs run."

Mrs. Coneybeare reports having seen a Horned Lark during the second week in February and wonders if it has been wintering here, or just came in time to see what a real blizzard looks like.

SASKATOON - A. McPherson.

Mr. McPherson informs us he has consented to supply quarterly reports for Audubon Field Notes from the Saskatoon district. Information of interest will be passed on to the BLUE JAY.

The following birds have recently been recorded: Downy Woodpecker (one in December), Bohemian Waxwing (several records for January and February but not so common as other years), Blue Jay (one pair in January), Black Capped Chickadee (scarce this year - one pair in February.)

SHEHO - W. Niven.

"Snowbirds are much more plentiful than last winter. A few common Redpolls are seen quite frequently. Pine Crosbeaks are much scarcer than last winter, when as many as thirty were seen feeding around. The Sharp-tailed Grouse are on the increase in this district. As many as fifty have been counted around the straw stacks. Ruffed Grouse are about the same as usual and Hungarian Partridge are very scarce. On December 1st three blackbirds came around the farmyard but they did not stay long. One had white tail feathers -- couldn't make out whether they were Rusty or Brewers species. They seemed to be males, but had no rusty coloration.

BIRDS:

YORKTON - Pauline Summers.

Miss Summers has sent us a very interesting list of bird observations made by the members of the Junior Nature Club at Simpson School. The boys, whose ages range from ten to thirteen, are to be highly complimented on their worth-while project and Miss Summers congratulated on the keen interest she has taken in organizing this Club, encouraging its members and assisting them with their identifications. Two hundred birds of sixteen species have been observed between October 7th and February 5th. Due to lack of space at this time we are very sorry that we will not be able to publish a list of the observers and the birds.

Here are Miss Summers' own observations: January 4, Downy Woodpecker; Jan. 16, Magpie; February 6, four White Winged Crossbills (Miss Summers believes that the only record for a White Winged Crossbill for the Yorkton district, was a female found dead two years ago by Ronald Coghill). February 6 and 12, Chickadees.

NIPAWIN - Maurice G. Street, writes:

"On April 18, 1948, I was kneeling beside a two-funnel sparrow trap removing Common Redpoles and banding them one by one, when I was suddenly interrupted by a whirr of wings. Looking up quickly, I expected to see a hawk either making off or perched in some nearby trees. Seeing nothing I glanced down at the trap, which still contained half a dozen Redpoles, and there was the hawk trying to get through the top. Surprised and excited as I was, I simply closed my hand over it, banded and released it. It was a female Sparrow Hawk in perfect condition, yet probably very hungry, for eighteen inches of snow still remained on the ground at this date."

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A Coopers' Hawk Nest.

On July 26, 1948, in a thickly-treed poplar bluff, a few miles northwest of Sheho, Saskatchewan, M. G. Street found a Coopers' Hawk nest containing four young. The nestlings, fully feathered, flew readily when the nest tree was approached. Three were captured after much difficulty and were banded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife service bands, then released. The adults were quite shy, keeping out of sight amid the dense foliage, but frequently calling -- a call very similar to that of a Pileated Woodpecker or Yellow-shafted Flicker.

Some fifty yards from the hawk's nest a colony of Purple Martins, consisting of 8 or 10 pair were nesting in old tree stumps. Most of the martins were feeding young and they made a great out-cry whenever the adult Coopers' Hawks put in an appearance while bringing food for the young hawks or departing. No attempt to molest the martins was seen, however.

Three hundred yards from the Coopers' Hawk nest a pair of Red-tailed Hawks had raised their young and were still in the vicinity. They screamed incessently while the banding operations were being carried out.

A quarter mile distant from the first, a second Coopers' Hawk nest was found. One juvenile and both adults were seen. From the amount of white down still clinging to the sticks and twigs about the nest, it was evident that three or four young had only left shortly before.

BIRDS

MARKET HUNTERS

We are indebted to Mr. A. E. Swanston, of the Provincial Museum for this condensation of an article in "Outdoor Life", written by Michael Norman.

In the years between 1870 and 1890 some people were of the opinion that the supply of animals and birds was inexhaustible. Frank Mayer, the Buffalo Hunter, was one of the last of the professionals who killed game to supply areas not yet reached by the railroads. Mayer contracted to furnish a wholesaler every week with at least three tons of big game, rough dressed. He was paid ten cents a pound for deer, elk and antelope; 12½ for mountain sheep and 15 for bear. His first two days of hunting netted him 5600 pounds of meat.

Most atrocious of the many crimes against our game was the extinction of the passenger pigeon. These birds were so thick that they darkened the skies as they passed on their migratory flights. As late as 1878 a nesting area in Michigan covered 150,000 acres and was populated by an estimated billion and a half pigeons.

The details of the slaughter are revolting. Netting was the favorite method of capturing them. A likely looking opening in the woods was selected and the ground was bated with salt and a few "stool pigeons" -- birds blinded by sewing their eyes shut -- were planted, and a large net was rigged high over head. The birds came to the bait eagerly and when they blanketed the ground two or three feet deep the net was dropped. A single cast netted 500 to 1000 birds and a dozen casts a day were not unusual. The pigeons were either killed for the market or crated alive for sale to trapshooting clubs. In one month in 1878 almost fifteen million pigeons were shipped to market. It is estimated that in that year more than a billion wild pigeons were sold in the United States. The last pigeon died in a Cincinnati, Ohio, zoo in 1914.

King of the Market Hunters was H. Clay Merritt. In 1858, on the coming of a railroad to Henry County, he started hunting. He estimated that each year for thirty years 25,000 jacksnipe were killed for market in Illinois. In the '70's, in Iowa alone, a million prairie chickens were killed each season for several years. For the New York State market hunters shot 1000 grouse in a season. Hotels hired their own market hunters. In Texas, a party of hunters bagged 10,157 robins. Residents of one town in Louisiana killed 120,000 robins and sold them for five cents a dozen. Eskimo curlews were so abundant that as many as 2500 were killed in one day. In the early 70's, market hunters frequently dumped carloads by the roadside when the price fell.

A list of birds once available at New York City markets included bobolinks, grouse, swans, loons, wild turkeys, pheasants, snipe, partridges, plover, sandpipers, curlews, sea-side finches, skylarks, meadow larks, wood tatlers, orioles, snowbuntings, blackbirds, kingfishes, blue jays, brown thrashers, thrushes, juncos, cedar waxwings and bullfinches.

For killing ducks some hunters used what is called a Big Bertha. It weighed 78 pounds and was 10½ feet long. Each charge was 1½ pounds of black powder and a similar amount of BB shot. It sometimes killed a hundred ducks at a single discharge.

BIRDS

PTARMIGAN

Mr. E. W. Brooman, of Prince Albert, has sent us a very interesting account of efforts to transplant the Willow Ptarmigan from Northern Saskatchewan to Iron River, Michigan. The experiment is being carried out by the state of Michigan, in the hopes that these birds will become established there. The work in Saskatchewan has been conducted by Harold J. Richards, Conservation Commissioner and Dr. G. A. Ammon. Up to the present time about 130 birds have been shipped.

Indian s, who capture the birds with fish nets, are being paid two dollars for each live one. Most of the ptarmigan have been taken from Stony Rapids at the east end of Lake Athabaska. They are shipped to Prince Albert by plane. If direct connections can be made they are immediately flown out again by C.P.A. When connections cannot be made directly, Mr. G. E. Lund, of Prince Albert, cares for them until time for the next plane.

Unfortunately the mortality has been fairly high but with experience these difficulties are being overcome. Reports from Michigan indicate that some of the birds have already been recorded as far as five miles from the point of release. The experiment is attracting much attention there.

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E. W. Hamilton, of Mossy Vale, sent a female White-winged Crossbill recently to the museum. He explained that these birds stopped by the thousands this winter and that he had caught many of them in squirrel traps. "Apparently", he wrote, "they had entered squirrel dens for protection from the extreme cold."

-- W A N T E D --

An attempt on the part of every member

to

get a new member in March.

1948 Christmas Bird Counts.

Burnham, Sask. (No date given) - Birds seen within a ten-mile radius of the Ward Farm. Temperature 5 below zero to 20 above zero. About 8 inches of snow. Summerfallow fields blown free of snow. Hawk, (unidentified) 1; Hungarian Partridge, 20; European Starling, 1; English Sparrow, 100; Total, 4 species, 122 individuals. A. Ward.

Fort San, Sask. Dec. 26. - A walk of one hour through scattered trees and shrubs in a valley. Distance covered approximately 2½ miles. Temp. 15 above zero. Calm, bright sunshine. 12 inches of snow. Downy Woodpecker, 1; American Magpie, 2; Black-capped Chickadee, 2; English Sparrow, 50 (est.); Common Redpoll, 4; Total, 5 species, 59 individuals (est.). 4 or 5 Pine Grosbeaks seen Dec. 29. Dried wild fruit and weed seeds plentiful.

Richard A. Nevard.

Gerald, Sask. Dec. 30. - Birds noted about the farm and during a drive of three miles to the Town of Gerald by team and sleigh. Weather, clear. Temp. 24 above zero. 20 inches of snow. Ruffed Grouse, 9; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 6; Hungarian Partridge, 5; Blue Jay, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 4; Pine Grosbeak, 12. Total, 6 species, 37 individuals. Box Elder seed and snowberry fruit abundant.

Lad. Martinovsky.

Hawarden, Sask. Dec. 25. - Open prairie except for groves about farms. Birds observed while going about the chores, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Weather stormy, strong east wind with drifting snow. Snow 12 in. in depth. Hungarian Partridge, 11; English Sparrow, 150 (est.); Snow Bunting, 2; Total, 3 species, 163 individuals (est.). Other species observed during December include, Sharp-tailed Grouse, 11; Snowy Oil, 2; and Sawhet Owl, 1. Harold Kvinge.

Lang, Sask. Dec. 31. - Birds seen about the farm and on a walk of two miles along a wooded creek. Time afield, 4 hours, 9 a.m. to 1. p.m. Strong south-east wind with drifting snow. Twelve inches of snow, drifted to several feet in places. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 27; Cock Ring-necked Pheasant, 1; American Magpie, 15; English Sparrow, 90 (est.); Snow Bunting, 15. Total, 5 species, 149 individuals (est.). Hungarian Partridge, 20, noted Jan. 4. Leonard Dreger.

Naicam, Sask. Jan. 2. - Sky overcast, light winds with an occasional snow flurry. A walk of 4 miles through brush and fields. Sharp-tailed Grouse, 6; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; American Magpie, 1; Pine Grosbeak, 8; Snow Bunting, 10. Total, 5 species, 26 individuals.

W. Yanchinski.

Nipawin, Sask. to Fishing Lakes. Dec. 31. - 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Bright sunshine, wind, calm. 6 inches of snow. Temperature 16 above zero. Total miles covered, one way only in each case: One observer alone, 7 miles (5 by car and 2 on foot). Two observers together 76 miles (all by car). Goshawk, 1; Pigeon Hawk, 1; Spruce Grouse, 28; Ruffed Grouse, 1; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 34; Willow Ptarmigan, 2;

Hungarian Partridge, 10; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; American Three-Toed Woodpecker, 2; Canada Jay, 6; Blue Jay, 13; American Magpie, 12; Raven, 11; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Hudsonian Chickadee, 3; Bohemian Waxwing, 12; Northern Shrike, 2; English Sparrow, 700 (est.); Evening Grosbeak, 27; Pine Grosbeak, 5; Common Redpoll, 59; Red Crossbill, 235 (est.); White-winged Crossbill, 23; Slate-colored Junco, 3; Snow Bunting, 161; Total, 25 species, 1357 individuals (est.). Five Horned Larks seen, Dec. 13. Coniferous trees heavily fruited and dried wild fruit plentiful. The Pigeon Hawk has been raiding the flocks of English Sparrows at the Grain elevators daily. The Slate-colored Juncos and Willow Ptarmigan were seen at Fishing Lake. The largest invasion of Crossbills ever recorded at Nipawin.

Walter Matthews, Billy Matthews, M.G. Street.

Ridgedale, Sask. Dec. 28. - 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. Four miles on foot. Overcast, with S.W. wind at 10 m.p.h. Temperature 10 degrees. Sharp-tailed grouse, 12; Hungarian Partridge, 3; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Magpie, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 20; English Sparrow, 80, (est.); Common Redpole, 8; Total, 7 species, 126 individuals. Snowy Owl noted on Dec. 27.

J. H. More.

Regina, Sask., Dec. 27. - 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Birds seen while driving from Regina to Moose Jaw. English Sparrows, several. Hungarian Partridge, 9 in two flocks; Ring-neck Pheasant, 1 male; Magpie, 2.

Saskatoon, Sask. Jan. 1. - Weather clear; temperature 7 degrees; winds north 15 m.p.h. Distance 7 to 9 miles on foot along the river bank. Mallards, 28; American Golden Eyes, 3.

A. McPherson.

Sheho, Sask., Jan. 1. - Birds noted while doing chores about the Niven Farm. Weather clear. Wind, calm. Average temperature, 10 above zero. Snow, 6 inches on level, drifted to 4 feet around bluffs. Ruffed Grouse, 5; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 20; Great Horned Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker; 3; American Magpie, 1; Black-capped Chickadee, 5; Pine Grosbeak, 4; Snow Buntins, 30 (est.). Total, 9 species, 70 individuals (est.). Three unidentified Blackbirds and 2 crows seen Dec. 1. Dried wild fruit and weed seeds plentiful.

Wm. Niven.

Torch River, Sask. Birds noted about the Francis Farm and surrounding country-side between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. The greatest number of each species seen at one time only are recorded. Six inches of snow. Weather mild. Sky clear. Goshawk, 1; Ruffed Grouse, 4; Sharp-tailed Grouse, 6; Hungarian Partridge, 13 (est.) Great Horned Owl, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Canada Jay, 5; Blue Jay, 4; American Magpie, 4; Raven, 4; Black-capped Chickadee, 3; White-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Red-breasted Nuthatch, 1; Northern Shrike, 1; English Sparrow, 27 (est.); Bronze Grackle, 1; Evening Grosbeak, 6; Pine Grosbeak, 15; White-winged Crossbill, 10; Snow Bunting, 15; Total, 20 species, 124 individuals (est.). Other species recorded during December include: Golden Eagle, Pileated Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Hudsonian Chickadee and Pine Siskin. Coniferous trees exceptionally heavy-fruited.

C. Stuart Francis.

1948 Christmas Bird Counts.

Wallwort, Sask., Jan. 1. - Birds seen about the Turnquist Farm and a walk through Tamarac, spruce and poplar woods and across open fields. Weather mild, bright sunshine, wind calm. 10 inches of snow. Ruffed Grouse, 2; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Canada Jay, 3; Blue Jay, 3; Black-capped Chickadee, 1; Common Redpoll, 15. Total, 7 species, 28 individuals. J. Turnquist.

Yorkton, Sask. (Area 15 miles in diameter with Yorkton as center). - Dec. 26. - 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Overcast in morning, clear in afternoon; SW wind at 10 m.p.h.; snow averaging six inches in depth. Temperature 10 degrees at start, 22 degrees at noon. 10 observers in 4 groups. Total party hours afield, 9½ (4 by car and 5½ on foot); total party miles, 42 (35 by car and 7 on foot). Sharp-tailed Grouse, 27; Great Horned Owl, 1; Hairy Woodpecker, 1; Downy Woodpecker, 2; Blue Jay, 8; Magpie, 4; Black-capped Chickadee, 9; American Robin, 1; Cedar Waxwing, 5 (The Robin and Cedar Waxwings were in the vicinity of an open spring, beside the "Muskeg", just west of Yorkton. Both species were observed for fifteen minutes through 10 x 50 binoculars at distances as close as twelve feet. This appears to be the first record of Cedar Waxwings in Saskatchewan during the Christmas season - C.S.H.); European Starling, 4; English Sparrow, 179; Common Redpoll, 15; Snow Bunting, 342 (est). Total, 13 species, approximately 598 individuals. Four Cedar Waxwings were noted on Dec. 28, and 9 on Jan. 1, in down-town Yorkton. No Bohemian Waxwings have been noted thus far this winter. Wayne Bjorgan, Ken Bowes, Jerry Bulitz, D'Arcy Wershler, Merle Wershler. (Members Simpson School Nature Club); Jim Allen, Neil Black, Brother Clarence, Dr. C. J. Houston, C. Stuart Houston. (Members Yorkton Natural History Society).

1948 Bird Census Summary.

The 1948 Christmas census, consisting of 13 counts from widely-scattered Saskatchewan points, taken under more favorable weather conditions than in past counts, produced a sum total of 36 species and approximately 3023 individuals. This compares fairly well with former counts as to number of species recorded.

Two more species, hitherto unrecorded in previous counts bring the total species recorded in Saskatchewan in mid-winter to 60. The Cedar Waxwings reported by the Yorkton group stresses clearly the importance of never taking things for granted in the art of bird observing. How easily it would have been to have misidentified these birds as just another flock of Bohemians. Yes, its that second look that usually brings to light the rare or unexpected species.

The Pigeon Hawk at Nipawin, is also a new record.

The ever-abundant English Sparrow, the American Magpie and the Black-capped Chickadee seem to be the most often recorded. The game birds, for the most part, have made a great recovery from extreme scarcity of the past few years and with a favorable breeding season this year should almost reach their peak abundance. In the coniferous woods the Spruce Grouse are very abundant, and in the northern areas, at least, the Ruffed Grouse are quite plentiful.

Predators, the Goshawk and Great Horned Owl, are still scarce, (as are their chief prey - the rabbit.)

Pine and Evening Grosbeaks appear to be about as usual. The Bohemian Waxwing was not recorded at any point south of Nipawin, but have been quite abundant there since early fall. The heavy crop of spruce and pine cones are providing the Crossbills with fine fare and they are in unusual numbers in the northern forests.

Maurice G. Street.

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INFORMATION WANTED

We have obtained several March migration records but our information is not as complete as it might be. In March, 1945, 32 species of migratory birds were noted in Manitoba. Can we equal this record? Plan to make a "First seen" note of all our early bird arrivals and let us have a full report for the next issue. Early nesting records such as those of the Horned Owl and Canada Jay will also be greatly appreciated.

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MAMMAL SECTION

THE COYOTE

The unique feature of the BLUE JAY which has made it a treasure storehouse, not only to its subscribers, but to nature scientists in many parts of Canada, has been the inclusion of so many homely stories of interest about our animals and their antics. A keen observation and a sense of humor on the part of Mr. Gilroy, who lives in the Regina district, has added another to the list. He writes:

"I see coyotes practically every day, sometimes as many as four together. At night, especially when the train whistles they do some yodeling. Our dog, Smoky, has a great time with them. This morning two coyotes passed to within 200 yards of the house. Smoky went out to do his regular barking. One stopped and stayed within a tantalizing distance from him; the other went on to a knoll about 500 yards to one side and hung around there in an unassuming manner. Meanwhile the other kept drawing the dog out a little further until finally Smoky could stand it no longer and took after him. Away they went as hard, at least, as the dog could go. The coyote on the knoll stayed there until they had passed, then he took up the chase, closing in from the rear. When they got almost half a mile away from the buildings the front coyote stopped suddenly. It was then Smoky found himself, not with just one coyote, but with another at his rear. He didn't wait to ask questions but headed back home as fast as his legs would carry him, while the coyotes helped him along with little nips on the tail. I sure did laugh and Smoky must have enjoyed it too, for he arrived back looking as happy as a lark.

Paid Hunters

Use of paid hunters for coyote control was recommended by Noble E. Buell of the United States Wild Life Service in an address to a conference of Saskatchewan natural resources field officers in Regina recently. He said his department was not concerned with extermination of the coyote, curse to cattlemen and poultry farmers, but was concentrating on controlling the animals destruction. "The coyote was likely to remain in the west for some time to come, since it was very adaptable to new stamping grounds if chased from old ones", he added, "and naturalists need have little fear of its extermination."

Saskatchewan News.

Many naturalists do have fear for its extermination as well as the extermination of other predators, for there is no telling where a halt will be called should this sort of thing get under way. The offenders should pay the penalty. But this, we believe, is no excuse for an attempted wholesale slaughter of the species in areas where they probably do more good than harm.

We invite comments and frank opinions about the advisability of employing paid hunters for coyote control. ---- Editor.

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Timber wolves have been reported from Torch River by Mr. S. Francis. On February 5, a neighbor of his, while hauling sawlogs, came across a freshly killed deer, which had been brought down by them. The deer was still unfrozen and wolf tracks were all around it.

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DEER and COYOTES

Mr. Z. M. Hamilton, writing in the Regina Leader Post, reports that from a portion of the Qu'Appelle Valley, lying between Craven and Piapot's Reserve, coyotes are causing havoc among the deer. The snow, he explains, is not strong enough to support the deer and so they plunge belly deep in the drifts, become exhausted and fall easy victims to their pursuers who are light enough on their feet not to break through the crust.

He tells the story of a rancher in the Craven district who saw some coyotes pursuing a band of deer. He hurried to his house for a rifle and when he returned found that the "brutes" had pulled down a deer and were actually engaged in their "horrid" feast, although there was still some life left in their victim.

(This very area is my most cherished "hunting ground". Within it lies the wild life sanctuary of the Regina Natural History Society.

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Almost any summer evening during the past three years deer could be seen in the coulees and meadows. A year ago last fall, early on the first morning of the hunting season and for days that followed a constant bombardment of rifles echoed from hill to hill. Happy hunters loaded their cars and returned home, while many unhappy victims limped among tangled fallen trees on the ravine embankments and lay down to die. There were not as many last fall and we missed them. Perhaps their numbers have even dwindled since then, but the coyotes were hungry -- the hunters were not. Editor.)

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"BUCK FOR BUCKS"

From Winnipeg comes the story that thousands of snowbound deer in southern Manitoba, facing death by starvation or slaughter by predators are to receive an immediate aid feeding program. The provincial government will supply emergency food supplies where the need is greatest. It will undertake, the last two weeks in February, the first census of the deer population by air.

Many deer have left their natural feeding places to raid stocks for domestic animals. Farmers are laying out feed and putting up deer in their corrals and barns. It is feared that the worst month is still ahead for the deer. More snow will fall and it also will crust over. It is then the deer mortality rate jumps sky high. A "buck for bucks" campaign to buy food for the starving animals has been organized by the greater Winnipeg Game and Fish Association.

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GERALD -- Mr. Martinosky sent us an interesting photograph, showing a cat peering contentedly from a badger hole. The cat raised her kittens there in the bank of a big cut on No. 22 highway in the Cut Arm Valley. It was Mr. Martinosky's cat.

He also reported that a Bob Cat was treed by dogs last summer in the same valley and believes that this is the first one reported from his district in many years.

OKLA -- Mrs. W. Roach.

"In July the men were pulling trees with the help of a team when they noted that three little squirrels came out of a hole in a poplar tree which previously had been used by woodpeckers. The animals did not appear to be the red squirrel, which is common in this district."

(These might be flying squirrels. A number have been reported from Moose Mountains and other places. They are apparently more common than is usually supposed. Mr. Francis and his sons at Torch River do considerable trapping in the winter time. From among over 100 squirrels taken this winter five percent were flying squirrels. --ED.)

MAMMALS

GRENFELL - John Hubbard Jr. writes:

Coyotes which were very numerous during the winter of 1947-48 were hunted extensively and appear to be on the decrease.

Muskrats were more plentiful last fall than since 1928. Unfortunately, there was a very dry fall, sloughs are low, and it is believed that many will die out this winter.

White-tailed deer are quite numerous and there were more hunters this year than ever. We believe that more deer were shot before the season than during the season, and suspect that the largest percentage of these were shot at night.

Jack Rabbits seem to have disappeared completely from this district and bush rabbits are not numerous.

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HUDSON BAY -

From this town comes the news that wolves are showing up in increasing numbers in settled areas where, until last year, they had not been seen for years.

Reason for the appearance of timber wolves in this comparatively southern area is believed to be the shortage of rabbits, which are just emerging from the bottom of their 10-year cycle and are extremely scarce in this area.

The government, this year, reduced the bounty payment on wolves from $25 to $10. This has resulted in less effort on the part of trappers to capture the wily animals.

Moose appear more plentiful this year than for many years and the animal that was once nearing extinction seems to be making a come-back in north-eastern Saskatchewan.

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INFORMATION -- PLEASE

Report "first seen" records of bats. Are all bats of Western Canada migratory? Have any traces been found of these hibernating?

- 0 -

How have the deer come through the winter? Are there any indications of disaster, such as that feared in parts of Manitoba?

- 0 -

How is the porcupine situation? Where have they been observed recently?

- 0 -

A report on the prevalence of rats and indications of damage done by them will be greatly appreciated.

- 0 -

MAMMALS

PRINCE ALBERT - E. W. Brooman.

A very young black bear cub was recently acquired by the Wild Life Exhibit by G. E. Lund. The bear weighed only 12½ oz. Some idea of the small size may be realized from the fact that the cub was only about 6 inches long and that its cubic bulk was about the size of a large tumbler.

The bear was discovered at Cumberland House on January 11 by a party who were bulldozing a trail. The mother bear was killed and an examination of the den revealed one live cub. The cub was taken and unsuccessful attempts were made to feed it from a bottle. In estimating its age it was noted that the nails were sharp, and the navel completely healed. The fur was well developed. While it is difficult to accurately estimate the age, it was placed at about one month.

According to Anthony, black bear cubs are born almost naked, toothless and their eyes do not open for some time. Single cubs are said to vary in weight from eight to eighteen ounces. Further, Anthony stated that cubs are born between January and March. It is highly probable that this cub was born in December. It is likely that, for this latitude and location, December is a very early date. It is not usual for a female bear to leave her den until her cubs are six or eight weeks old. It is doubtful if a female bear, in this latitude, could leave her den much before the end of March. In this particular case, the cubs would be at least 12 weeks old.

Since small cubs are an adaptation of the Ussidae to prevent excessive feeding during hibernation, it is again reasonable to suppose that our record may be an early one. It is fairly common to see a female with two or even three cubs. If our date of December were common, it would mean that the mother bear would have to feed two and even three cubs for three months. It is hardly likely that this would be common, since it is not for the best interest of the species. Since bears in Northern latitudes must leave their dens later than those more southerly, it is probable that the time of having cubs would be later than the more Southern species.

(Mr. Brooman has sent us several observational articles of interest. Unfortunately, they arrived after the material for this issue was all prepared. We hope to make use of them later. ED.)

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"Nature is a better tonic than anything your doctor can prescribe. It is the urge that takes you strolling in the fresh air with every sense alive for a sign of beauty. It is the companionship of other living things whose exciting lives twine with ours and upon whose prosperity we often unknowingly depend.

Nature is the wonder of moonlight, the unexplained glory of the skies, star-studded, imponderable. It is the love of color and sound. It is an interest in the wonder of creation, the satisfaction of growing out and onward beyond our own human troubles. When you make a hobby of nature you find an exciting world all around you, and your interest in it will pay greater dividends than you dreamed possible."

Rachel Biggs,
Saskatoon Star-Phoenix.

BOTANY SECTION

Perhaps with the exceptions of the first appearance and songs of the Meadow Lark and Robin, nothing gives a greater thrill to naturalists in early spring than the sight of the first crocus or violet as they lift their delicate heads to herald in a new season.

For our records we would like an accurate report from various parts of the province, of all our April flowers as they first appear in bloom. The last two springs have been rather late, but in the Regina area we have recorded the following:

April 18, Frenchweed; April 19, Moss Phlox; April 20, Crocus Anemone; April 22, Leafy Musineon; April 25, Wild Parsley (Cogswellia); April 25, Red-seeded Dandelion; April 27, Common Dandelion; April 28, Tufted Milk-vetch; April 29, Early Cinquefoil; April 30, Plains Cymopteris.

Following within five days of these we noted Sand Bladderpod, Ray Pimpernel, Prairie Buttercup, Early Blue Violet, Sand Voilet, Rydberg's Violet (Canada Violet). There seems no doubt but that these also bloom in April in some Saskatchewan areas. How many more can you find in April ?

If you will press and dry any specimens that you are unable to identify and send them to the Editor of the BLUE JAY, he will make the determinations, and will publish them in our next issue. Send these on or before May 15.

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THALICTRUM BREITUNGII

Many of our members will be interested in the honor recently conferred on Mr. August J. Breitung, formerly of McKague, Sask. A new species of Meadow Rue has been named after him. In this connection the November-December, 1948, Canadian Field Naturalist reports: "This new species is named after August Breitung, a young amateur botanist of outstanding ability who accompanied A. E. Porsild to the Yukon in 1944 and is now on the staff of the Division of Botany and Plant Pathology, Ottawa."

By the way, Mr. Breitung was married, October 7 last, to Miss Mathilde K. Presch, of Ottawa. Congratulations on both counts, August.

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FORESTRY

From Torch River, C. Stuart Francis writes:

"While cutting white spruce trees for sawlogs on my own land last winter, I have been taking special notice regarding the rate of growth of spruce trees under various circumstances. On much of the forest where I have been cutting, the best and largest trees were cut down about twelve years ago, with only the undersized trees left. Some of the undersized trees had taken anywhere from 20 to 30 years to reach a diameter of about six inches; whereas, now that the big trees are removed, these small trees have

grown from 12 to 14 inches in diameter at one foot from the ground in about 12 years. This shows the benefits of good forest management and also shows that it is good sound judgment for any farmer in the northern part of the prairies, who has evergreen forests on his land, to protect the young forest as much as he can.

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Indian Pipes

Mr. Wm. MacNeill, Forester at Meadow Lake, reports having seen a clump of Indian Pipes last summer in an area south-east of Green Lake. In mid-winter (Feb. 7) he found a cluster of the same plants sticking through the snow on the north-east 36, township 63, range 24, West of the 3rd. This area is north of Big Island Lake, known on the maps as Lac des Isles.

(Mr. Cliff Shaw reported the presence of Indian Pipes in the Yorkton district last summer. We would like more reports on this interesting plant. ED.)

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Dwarf Mistletoe

Mr. R. F. Arnold, of the Department of Natural Resources, is very concerned over the increasing damage being done to our Jack Pine forests by this parasitic plant. He writes:

"The appearance of a mistletoe-infested forest is a deplorable sight and reminds one of the frightful human disease of elephantiasis in which human flesh is marred by huge growths."

"Mistletoe in Saskatchewan has only recently attracted pathologists' attention, although known for a long time by forestry men. Practically no research is available on the subject and scientists do not agree on the species or habit of the Saskatchewan form or on what host its life is prolonged in spreading from stand to stand. It has been reported on the forests of Lodgepole Pine in Southern Saskatchewan and is known to infect both Jack Pine and Black Spruce in Northern Saskatchewan."

All members are urged to send in authentic reports on its occurrence and also species determination if possible.

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Plants of Interest

Arch. C. Budd, of the Experimental Station at Swift Current identified some plants last summer which are not commonly found in this province and has been kind enough to send us some data on them.

Lupinus argenteus (Lupine) was found on a hillside about two miles S.W. of Rockglen. "This is, I think, the furthest eastern record so far, and was a surprise to me when I found it."

Ambrosis trifida (Great Ragweed) in large quantity alongside a large slough from two to three miles south of La Fleche. This is quite far west

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for this species nowadays. (This is the Ragweed which is held responsible for much of the hay-fever in Eastern Canda. It is abundant in the Red River Valley in Manitoba and is extending westward mostly along the railways. I have yet to find one of these plants growing in Sask. ED.)

Cuscuta curta (Dodder). I found a very interesting area on the Antler Creek near Carnduff and found this species of Dodder. In the same place I located some Western False Cromwell (Onosmodium occidentale) which is a new Saskatchewan record, I think. There also I found what I think is Nepeda cataria (Catnip).

At Skull Creek near Sidewood I found a clump of Sisymbrium Loesellii. (Loessel's Mustard) and incidentally found it very common at Kamloops, B.C. and in eastern Manitoba. (This plant is quite common in the Edenwold district, north east of Regina, ED.)

Some Saskatchewan Pentstemons or Beard-tongues.

The Beard-tongues or Pentstemons are an interesting and attractive genus, but have suffered somewhat at the hands of the plant taxonomists. Some omit the first "t" and call them Penstemons, some use Pentastemons, but the generally accepted name is Pentstemon. They are distinguished by their opposite leaves, funnel-form or campanulate flowers and by their fifth, sterile stamen which bears no anther and is generally bearded along one side. We, in southern Saskatchewan, have four common and one rare species, the White Beard-tongue or P. albidus; the Lilac-flowered Beard-tongue, P.gracilis; the Smooth Blue Beard-tongue, P. nitidus; the Slender Beard-tongue, P.procerus; and the rare Yellow Beard-tongue, P. confertus.

Our common species generally come into flower in the same regular order, first P. nitidus, from May 9 to May 26 (average date May 19); then P. albidus, from May 17 to June 22 (average June 5); next P. procerus, from May 27 to June 15 (average June 6); and later P. gracilis, from June 17 to June 25 (average June 20); the flowering dates of the earlier species being dependent on the earliness or lateness of the spring.

White Beard-tongue is a white-flowered species growing from 6 to 10 inches in height with a downy haired stem and oblanceolate, finely hairy leaves. The inflorescence is hairy and sticky and the plants grow in dry, exposed situations, sidehills, etc.

Smooth Blue Beard-tongue is the earliest flowering species and has smooth, bluish-green, glaucous leaves, the uppermost ones short and broadly ovate. The flowers are generally deep blue but range through many shades. I have a mount of this species with plants ranging from dark blue, through all shades of purple, red, pink to white, all gathered in an area about ten yards across on a side-hill near Eastend. It grows on steep sidehills, especially on dry, eroded slopes.

Slender Beard-tongue is a slender-stemmed species which generally grows in large colonies in the moister spots of the prairie, around non-saline sloughs, in the shelter of clumps of snow-berry, the sheltered side of coulees, etc. The deep blue flowers are borne in an interrupted spike and are quite small, but very striking when the plants are massed.

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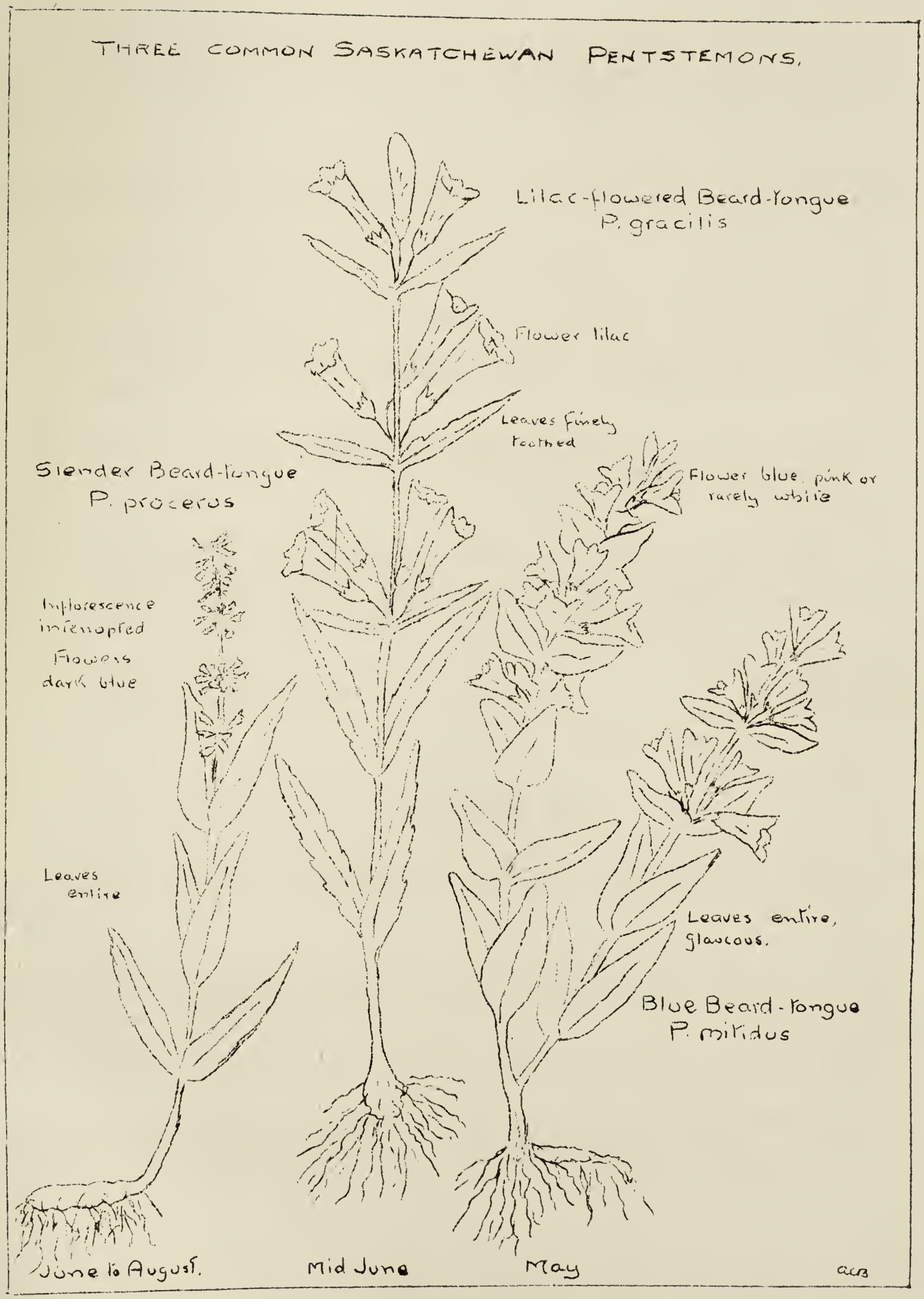
THREE COMMON SASKATCHEWAN PENTSTEMONS.
Lilac-flowered Beard-tongue
P. gracilis
Flower lilac
Leaves finely toothed
Slender Beard-tongue
P. procerus
Flower blue, pink or rarely white
Inflorescence interrupted
Flowers dark blue
Leaves entire
Leaves entire, glaucous.
Blue Beard-tongue
P. nitidus
June to August.
Mid June
May
ACB

The Lilac-flowered Beard-tongue is a taller, slender plant, found as a rule as single plants and not in clumps, on moist prairie, and slough margins. The flowers are narrow and almost cylindrical, of a pale purple or lilac colour.

The Yellow Beard-tongue is somewhat like the Slender Beard-tongue, but is a larger plant and has yellow flowers. It is a plant of the Foothills but has been found at Swift Current.

A simple key to identify our Pentstemon is:-

1. Corolla tube distinctly funnel-form, the tube widening decidedly towards the throat. 2.
   Corolla tube almost cylindrical and only slightly widening towards the throat. 3.

2. Plants without hairiness on stems or leaves. P. nitidus
   Plants with some hairiness on stems and leaves; inflorescence glandular. P. nitidus

3. Flowers from 5/8 to 3/4 inch long; inflorescence open; calyx and inflorescence glandular. P. gracilis.
   Flowers about 3/8 inch long; inflorescence interrupted but generally in dense clusters; calyx not glandular. 4.

4. Flowers yellow. P. confertus.
   Flowers purple or blue. P. procerus.

Arch. C. Budd.

THE PRAIRIE LILY

"To the children of Saskatchewan in the hope that every child may know the joy of seeing the spirit of midsummer embodied in a multitude of flaming lilies."

This is the foreward to a timely and splendidly written book of forty pages by Dorothy Morrison, pleading for the conservation of Saskatchewan's Floral Emblem. We have been waiting for just such a book. The presentation of the subject will appeal to all nature lovers. It is well illustrated and a special appeal in poetry and story will hold the interest of every child.

The BLUE JAY offers its congratulations to Mrs. Morrison and hopes that The Prairie Lily will soon find a place in every school library. It is published by the School Aids and Text Book Publishing Co., Regina.

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"Conservation is the intelligent management of all the benefits bestowed upon us by Nature, and the protection and preservation of those benefits, so that while yielding a maximum pleasure and profit today, they will remain inviolate as a heritage for the future."

The Carling Conservation Digest.

AMERICAN ASPEN by R. C. MACKENZIE

Afriend in England, who is an enthusiastic gardener, writes that he has an American Aspen in his garden, of which he is very proud. He mentions the rich green of its leaves in summer, the glowing gold of its autumn color.

American Aspen, more commonly known as White Poplar, is the commonest tree in this Province. Is it then without honor in its own land? Yielding a soft wood, for which there is at present little demand -- rarely planted in windbreak or garden -- it is sometimes spoken of as a tree weed.

Soon the Poplar Woods will awake in a misty greenery of new growth. First the long drooping catkins, silver-grey tassels for the new green curtain of spring, then as a thousand leaf-buds slowly open, the green mist creeps slowly steadily northward, from prairie bluffs to parklands and throughout the northern forests.

This Aspen, or White Poplar, as we seem to prefer to call it, is a very attractive tree. Usually from twenty to forty feet high, its brownish green bark is covered with a white powdery substance, giving it the appearance of being white barked. The leaves are smooth, fine teethed, ovate to almost heart-shaped, darker -- almost olive green above and lighter green below -- always wind-stirred, always musically moving.

Few trees are as well known or are distributed over so wide an area. It has many names. In the East it has been called Popple, Quaking Asp, Smooth-barked Poplar, and Aspen. In the mountains of the West it is called White Poplar, White Asp and Mountain Aspen. It is defined by botanists as Populus Tremuloides, the trembling poplar, because of the way its leaf stems are fastened sideways, making them very unstaple and causing them to tremble with every movement of air.

It is a prolific seeder. The minute light seed, attached to a downy tuft, is carried miles by the wind. In sheltered coulees on the north slopes of dry hills, or in lonesome stunted windswept bluffs, it is found far out upon the open plains. Aspen climbs to high altitudes in the mohntains, often forming part of the timber line. It extends along the valleys and in fall forms spots of gold among pine ahd spruce forests on high rocky slopes. It reaches far northward, sometimes to the limit of trees.

The wood has many uses. It is the principal source of firewood in the north and west and throughout the prairie region. Farmers and ranchers use it for poles, for corrals and fences and, in some districts, for building-logs, It is one of the best woods for making boxes and barrels for food-stuffs, since it has no odor and holds nails well. Excelsior is made from it. A plywood made from it has proved useful in certain kinds of interior finishing.

Aspen is the principal food of beavers and the material from which most of their dams are constructed. The natural irrigation and water conservation carried on by these builders of dams, would not be possible without an abundance of poplar logs and branches near by.

Subject to fungus attacks, its life-span in some regions is less than thirty years, but in the forests of north central Saskatchewan, where it lives under very favorable conditions, it sometimes reaches an age of eighty years, a diameter of two feet, and a height of over seventy feet.

In the lightest breeze the leaves of Aspen are always musically moving. This is the tree's best known characteristic. The chattering Aspen is the singing tree of the poets and musicians -- the tree with talking leaves -- June's pattering whisper of trembling sounds which have been interpreted into both music and poetry.

Blue skies and green Aspen woods. Tall slim poplars beside the lake. Such are the memories left with us of this very common tree.

ARCHAEOLOGY SECTION.

Dear Editor:

Your report that many Natural History people who returned the questionnaire, which was sent out in the last issue of the BLUE JAY, stated that they were interested in Archaeology, came as no surprise. I have found that everyone interested in the Stone Age is also a keen student of Natural History and it seems to hold that Nature Study has a connecting interest in Archaelogy.

Some problems in this science are actually problems in Natural History, For example, prehistoric Indians' favorite method of killing buffalo was by trapping them in pounds. Where are those old Buffalo Pounds? Early explorers and fur traders have written about the Plains Indians killing buffalo by means of pounds. They tell of how these pounds were built, their size and the methods used in getting parts of buffalo herds into them, the method of slaughter and the Indians' use of the animals following the kill. It is claimed that the tribe would live at the site until all the meat was used. Paul Cain, in his book, states that the pounds were used year after year, and in one instance he tells of a site used so long and often that after the stockade rotted down, the dried bones were piled up to sufficient height to take its place.

However, the early explorers were unable to tell us the definite locations of these pounds. They existed long before surveys were made of the plains. Only three or four have been rediscovered in Saskatchewan. Many more must exist and they will all be rich archaeological finds, for, buried in the long decayed bone piles are large quantities of every type of flint and stone tools and all weapons that the Indian ever used.

If the tribes lived at the pound site for a time after each kill, this means the old hearths and camp fire-places (if on uncultivated land) are still in place, although sodded over now. Around these hearths stone age history lays buried. Very little archaeological research has been done below ground level in Saskatchewan, but if such sites are investigated, the award would be amazing.

I suggest, Mr. Editor, that we ask our Natural History observers this question -- "WHERE ARE THE BUFFALO POUNDS?"

Sincerely yours,

Fred Robinson.

ARCHAELOGY

by
Albert E. N. Swanston

How many readers are interested in archaelogy, that fascinating natural history science which deduces a knowledge of past times from a study of their existing remains? If so, let us travel to a ravine or coulee, where there is a nice spring of water not too far away -- and dig.

I did this in 1940 in just such a ravine about eight miles west of Bulyea, Sask. I was walking along the bottom of this ravine and came to some mole hills. Being observant, I noticed these mole hills contained small pieces of bone. This seemed unusual so I took my shovel and tried to dig. To my surprise I found the bones to be so thick that I couldn't dig with a shovel and had to get a pick. Armed with these two instruments and a screen I went to work.

I soon found some small flint arrow heads and some buffalo rib bones, cut in about four inch lengths. These were hollowed out at one end to make handles for holding small scrapers and knives. Some of these handles were plain; some were decorated with notches; some with drawings of fish and one had a wolf or coyote carved on it.

This find turned out to be a "Midden", or Buffalo Pound. This is a place where the Indians made a corral and drove two or three hundred buffalo into it for slaughter. The Indians then camped there and tanned the hides and dried the meat for future use. That is the reason for finding so many artifacts on these sites. At this site, digging during my spare time for three years I found twenty-three hundred specimens, These are now in the National Museum, at Ottawa.

There are still lots of sites to be investigated. Itwould be appreciated if all new finds were reported to our Provincial Museum.

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HISTORIC SITES

"The most historic site around here," writes Marion Nixon of Wauchope, "is the old Cannington Manor settlement, west of Parkman, north of Manor and east of Moose Mountains. There is a lot of almost legend about it now in local annals.

The town was dissipated when the railway failed to come through the site. (Legend has it, it was dissipated, period.). Some of the old Manor houses are still standing, but many have suffered fires or other despoilation. The mill was used as lumber, and only a mass of iron junk remains to mark it. The church, though, is well kept and still used. If only one had time for a canvass of the remaining old-timers, before they are all gone, there would be tales to be recorded and pictures to save for posterity. Mrs. Hewlett has done considerable along this line. Some of her data is on file at the University of Saskatchewan.

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The following letter was received from Dr. R. C. Russell, of the University of Saskatchewan.

"I would like to draw your attention to what I consider a mistake on page 8 of the April to September issue of the BLUE JAY. It is the third item under Wild Life, Punnichy: Mrs. Madeline B. Runyan." (The paragraph referred to is as follows: "A cairn is suggested to mark the site of the first Hudson Bay post in the Touchwood Hills. Until a few years ago the stone chimney stood. This spot is five miles from the Runyan Farm." ED.)

"The stone chimney stood on the site of the third Hudson's Bay Company post, along highway No. 15 between Lestock and Punnichy, until a few years ago, It was built about 1874 and remained in use until about 1909.

The first post, (1852 - 1861), was built about six miles north and two miles west of Punnichy, according to Mr. Fred Morris, formerly Indian Interpreter at the Indian agency, just north of Punnichy. He has shown me this site along the old Carlton Trail.

The second site (1861 - 1874) was about seven miles south of Punnichy near the Gordon Mission. The three posts are described in the Canadian Geographic Society Journal, published about 1933.

I believe nothing has remained to mark the sites of the first two Touchwood Hills Hudson Bay posts, but the cellars, for many years."

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MUSEUM NOTES

With volume 7 the BLUE JAY begins a new period of its history. The editor, Mr. Carmichael, located in the Regina Normal School Building, which also houses the Provincial Natural History Museum, is well situated for keeping in touch with changes and developments in all phases of natural history in Saskatchewan.

The museum which has suffered many reverses seems now well on the road to outstanding success as a part of the Department of Natural Resources. It has a staff of enthusiastic young men whose sole concern is to improve the museum and the cause of natural history generally. Mr. Fred Bard who has been in the museum since 1925 is doing an excellent job of rejuvenating and reactivating the museum now that he is director. New habitat groups, paintings, Indian work and a herbarium have been added but most important perhaps is just the rearranging and face-lifting which make all exhibits more pleasing and educational. The assistants Mr. Swarston and Mr. Lahrman are well qualified and will accomplish much in our museum.

If you have not been in the museum for more than a year be sure to visit it at your earliest opportunity. You will be astonished at the changes which have taken place. The museum is the natural meeting place of all people interested in wild life. You will always be welcomed in the museum by others of interests similar to your own. We need a fire-proof building in which the fine exhibits of our musuem will be safe and where they may be seen at times convenient to the general public.

G. F. Ledingham.

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Mr. Bard informs us that the museum is anxious to obtain lists of nesting birds from good observers, in order to present the over-all picture of their distribution. For this purpose, sight records, in themselves, are of no value. "My experience", said Mr. Bard, "proves that our breeding-bird lists are diminishing in length and for this reason we require as much information as possible."

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Colonial nesting birds information would be very welcome at the present time. Will members please give information as to the size of the colonies, the land location and the names of the land owners. In this way some valuable information may be collected and organized about the habits of pelicans, cormorants, gulls, terns, herons, grebes, etc.

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Recently two fairly large bull snakes were sent to the provincial museum by the North Dakota Game and Fish League, Bismarck. They were found hibernating in a haystack and were shipped in an apple box lined with hay. Awakened by the warmth of the museum storeroom both of the snakes escaped through a hole in the box. One was found immediately twined around a stump in a group display. The other was not found until next day. It had crawled through three rooms and was found in a box of twigs on a shelf some eight feet from the floor. About 500 visitors to the museum viewed these snakes in an appropriately arranged display case, Saturday and Sunday, February 19 and 20.

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- MEMBERS -

(Please pass this along to your friends.)

I am interested in the activities of the Saskatchewan Natural History Society and would like to become a Member and subscribe to the BLUE JAY.

Mail to:
Wm. Whitehead,
Sec'y, S.N.H.S.
2624 Angus Blvd.,
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